

CHURCH MANAGEMENT FROM AN ASIAN PERSPECTIVE:
A CASE STUDY OF THE LAO-CAMBODIAN
MINISTRY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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Abstract

Church Management From An Asian Perspective: A Case Study of the Lao-Cambodian Ministry of Southern California

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This case study aims at presenting some effective ways of organizing and managing ministry to the Indochinese refugees in the U.S. In the past programs were set up, but a majority of them failed because they did not deal with the real needs of the refugees. The thesis of this paper is that in working with Lao-Cambodian refugees in the Long Beach area, it is essential to start with the cultural and social patterns and historical developments of the target population, and build the community on the basis of these factors. The foundation for such a ministry is "love for neighbors" and "the Church for others." This theological foundation takes on a specifically cultural meaning in the ministry for the refugees.

The implementation of this thesis is partially utilizing existing theories of church management which are compatible with the target population, and other church management theories that are indigenous to the people. The programming covers practically all of the refugee community's life, including social, spiritual/psychological and community development areas. The major emphasis of the program is leadership development and the spiritual and social nurture of the community.

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INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, thousands of Indochinese refugees came to the United States. A 1983 survey by the Long Beach Health Department revealed that of over 166,000 Cambodians and Laotians in the United States, 8,756 Cambodians and 429 Laotians lived in Long Beach. Long Beach has the largest concentration of Cambodians and Laotians in the entire U.S. While the resettlement/adjustment/self-development phase is taking place, these refugees need an extraordinary amount of human care in almost every detail of life in the U.S. They need survival skills, health care, housing, legal assistance, translation, job skills development and placement, indigenous help in psychological dysfunction and in giving overall purpose to life, assistance in development of a new life style/identity for young adults and youth, and finally, language skills development. This project undertakes to develop the theological and church management aspects of the Lao-Cambodian ministry of Southern California in order to meet the following goals:

1. To create a worship, supportive fellowship as the center of the community life.
2. To reach out to large numbers of young adults

represented in the target community.

3. To meet, as much as possible, the extraordinary human-care needs of this refugee population.
4. To develop leadership within the worshipping community.
5. To become advocates for the Cambodian/Laotian community in the Long Beach area.

The scope and limitations of this project are to present the ongoing ministry to the Lao-Cambodian refugees in the Long Beach area, and to focus on the organization and administration of this particular group. This study will include only Cambodians who speak Laotian or Yaw. The procedure for integration will focus on management experiences and problems as they relate to the unique needs of the Lao-Cambodian refugees who came from a peasant economy with Buddhist backgrounds, and are now in a developing Christian community. Field study is the major method of fulfilling this project.

CHAPTER 1
Historical and Cultural Background of
the Lao-Cambodian (Yaw) People

Cambodia is a kingdom in southeastern Asia on the South China Sea; the kingdom was formerly called Khmer. Its capital is Phnom Penh. It is one of three small countries that make up the Associated States of Indochina. The others are Vietnam and Laos. Most of Cambodia is level land, but there is a mountain range along the coast with peaks as high as 5,700 feet. There are large areas of jungle. The climate is warm and damp, and there are only two seasons -rainy and dry.

History of the Cambodian (Khmer) People to
the End of the Vietnam War

The Khmer people belong to an ethnic group known as Khmer-Mon. The Khmer-Mon group came from the union of the Indonesians with the Melanesian Australoid stock. Around 500 B.C. a megalithic civilization settled on the elevated soil along the Annam coastal plains and the Mekong delta, while a very brilliant civilization expanded in Cambodia. It was a civilization of refined stone, bronze, and iron that has become well known since the discovery of the Khmer prehistoric sites of Samron Sen, M'lu Prei and Long Prao.

The Khmer-Mon were farmers, cattle breeders, and fishermen. They had their houses built on pilework (as is still the case in the Cambodian countryside) and made their tools of stone, bronze and bone.

Khmer-Mons were organized into agricultural communities under the control of a leader whose function was to perform the special rites to reconcile the spirits of soil and water and to handle other matters of the harvest. The Khmer kingdom applied this organizational structure to the entire country. It is at this point that one can talk about Khmer culture in its purest state. The old Khmer-Mon stock can be dated before the first century B.C., that is, before "Indianization" of the country began. Present Khmer culture owes much to this civilization.¹

As time passed, Khmer culture was influenced by Thais, Vietnamese, Chinese and Burmese. Burmese influence is seen in the temples and the peacock dance. There has been a constant interpenetration as shown by the Khmer temples located in Thailand territory, as well as the influence of Khmer choreography. Then came the influence of the West, first through the Spanish and Portuguese, later the French, and recently the Americans.

¹ Carole Chan, "Aspects of Khmer Culture," Bridging Cultures, ed. George M. Nishinaka (Los Angeles: Special Service for Groups, 1983), 91-92.

During the Angkor era, when Khmer culture flourished, the great epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana inspired textbooks and fresco bas-reliefs; sacred choreographical performances attained their perfection. It was a great period of construction and development of towns and monuments; it was a golden age of architecture, sculpture, poetry, philosophy, and astrology. Today Angkor retains only inscriptions in stones that provide fragmentary and limited data. Nevertheless, the smiles of Angkor appear everywhere as a sign, a reminder of the dynamism of the Khmer culture during the earlier period. These smiles are profound and mysterious, charming and fascinating. Through these smiles, one can begin to have a notion of some of the secrets of the political and cultural lives of the Khmers of Angkor, the forefathers of the present day Khmers.²

Cambodia was under French colonialism until 1946. The king of Cambodia, his ministers and parliament were working hard to modernize the lives of the people. Unfortunately, in 1975 Cambodia was invaded by communists, and lost its independence. Some Cambodians fled their homeland to find peace in neighboring countries.

The Structure of the Lao-Cambodian (Yaw)
and Social Life

2. Chan, 92-93.

It is important for the reader to keep in mind that the term "Lao-Cambodian" used in this study refers to the group of Yaw people. They are Cambodians by birth, but historically their ancestors were Laotians. They used to live in villages along the border between Thailand and Cambodia. They speak Lao and prefer to be called the Yaw people.

Family

The family structure of the Lao-Cambodian, as described by B. Phommasouvahn,³ is the strongest social unit. The word "family" has a broad meaning and covers ground beyond any Western perception and comprehension. It may be described as an extended family system. A Lao-Cambodian family usually is large, with an average of six to eight members. It often consists of two family units, one being the in-laws and the other the immediate family. Lao-Cambodian parents take pride in having a son and building a future for him. However, they still favor the youngest daughter as the child they prefer to live with. Lao-Cambodians continue to share the house with their children after marriage. The youngest daughter (or daughters) receive a larger share of the family properties than the

3 Bounlieng Phommasouvahn, "Aspects of the Lao Family and Social Life," Bridging Cultures, ed. George M. Nishinaka (Los Angeles: Special Service for Groups, 1983), 84.

sons, because the sons usually build their fortunes elsewhere. The groom is expected to move in with his in-laws on his wedding day, and will continue to stay there until another daughter of the family gets married, in which case the house would be too crowded. Sometimes, the bride moves in with the groom's family when it has no daughter. The Lao-Cambodian family is not confined to only one household, since by definition it includes blood relatives, as well as relatives by marriage. The Lao word for relatives, phinong, has a strong kinship connection, suggesting extensive family ties.

Role of the Men and Women. The man is always the head of the family. He makes all critical decisions and oversees the general welfare of the family. The father (or father-in-law) is still the most respected and influential person in the family. He retains his status as the symbolic head of the family and is consulted before any decision is reached.

The male members of the family do the heavy work and enjoy a great deal of privilege and power. The men spend a lot of time with friends and neighbors to maintain their manly image. They may even stop by a friend's house for a drink or chat on the way home from work. When there is a social gathering, the men occupy the living room, while the

women do all the dirty work in the kitchen.

The role of the women is largely in the home. They do the cooking, household work and light labor on the farm. They must show respect to men. However, women play a significant role in controlling money. This is logical, if one understands the nature of the Lao-Cambodian men.⁴

Family Responsibilities. Lao-Cambodians maintain strong ties with their relatives and have an extensive kinship system. The word "relative" or phinong is both broad and specific. Tied in with the extensive, strong family bond are family obligations that one has to fulfill. For example, parents are responsible for raising, guiding, educating and teaching some basic trades and farming techniques to their children. They also spend a lot of time teaching moral values to and disciplining their children. The mother prepares her daughters to be good mothers and wives by teaching them how to cook, sew and weave cloth in their early years. Parents usually play the role of matchmaker for their children. Lao-Cambodian children marry when they are 15 or 16 years old, a custom that continues even in the U.S.

Since the family is a strong social unit, a lot of importance is attached to the home. When a family moves into a new home, they hold a religious ceremony in which friends and neighbors take part. Lao-Cambodians have a -----

4 Phommasouvahn, 85.

religious ceremony at home once a year to bless the family.

Buddhist Ethics and Attitudes

In Cambodia, life revolves around religion and the growing season. The majority of the Cambodians are Buddhist. Buddhism is a strong influence in their lives. The Theravada Buddhism of Cambodia is more like the older forms of Buddhism than the Mahayana Buddhism of Vietnam. A central belief of Buddhism is that one's behavior in the present life has a bearing on one's condition in the future life of rebirths-reincarnations. Because the spirit may be reborn in animal as well as human form, Lao-Cambodians are generally reluctant to harm any living thing.

Buddhists believe that the way to regain release from the circle of rebirths is to abandon desire, ambition, craving, longing and selfishness. This is not to be taken to the extreme of self-denial, but rather in pursuit of the middle path, namely, moderation in all things. Buddhism rejects not only killing, but also stealing, lying, gambling, unchastity, or taking strong drink. The middle path of life that is encouraged by Buddhism is not intense or compulsive.

Lao-Cambodian quietness is reflected in soft speech and light movements. It may require great effort to hold a conversation with them. Generally, expressions of emotion

are made only in private. Emotions are not shameful to Lao-Cambodians but again, moderation is the rule. Extremes of emotion or exaggeration are not accepted.

Social Life

The Buddhist temple, called a wat, used to be the main source of knowledge. A young man went to the wat to learn how to be a good man, that is, a good Buddhist and a good husband. It is believed that a young man should become a novice or monk once in his lifetime. But young people do not take religion very seriously. They largely learn the Buddhist ways by observing. They often look to religion as a source of social activities.

In Cambodia, the two main seasons affect the people's social life. During the rainy season (May-October) most of the Lao-Cambodian people are occupied with farming and growing rice. By November most farmers are through with harvesting. The growing season keeps them very busy and restricts their social activities. After the rainy season, many Lao-Cambodians again become free of hard labor and can put their minds to rest by slowing down and enjoying life. No one feels offended or takes things seriously in this season. Everybody lets himself go.

The New Year celebration takes place in April. It is also the celebration of the birth of Buddha. The celebration lasts three days, and both religious and social

activities are organized. On this occasion, the whole village goes to the temples to clean, polish and perfume the statues of Buddha. The New Year is the rare occasion that allows young people to play games that permit physical contact. That is really special for a society that looks down upon any sexual interaction.

In village life, ceremonies such as lieng phi (feed the spirits), sia kho (keep away mishaps) or hop xouk (receive fortune) are common. They are designed to atone to and be in peace with the spirits. Ceremony usually involves a pig or chicken. Man can be in harmony with the phi by observing the customs of the land and not disturbing the balance of nature.

Lao-Cambodians are very conscious about their social status. They must carry themselves properly in speech and behavior at all times. A smile on one's face, a nod of the head, "yes" or "no" does not tell the true feeling of a Lao-Cambodian. They carry themselves the way they are expected to, not the way they want to. They also use this type of behavior to avoid confrontation and to fend off foreign influence. They used this technique effectively against the French missionaries who tried to convert them to Christianity. They never gave an outright "no" to the missionaries when they were asked to attend mass or preach.

sessions, but they never showed up, and always had excuses for not attending.

A further key to understanding Lao-Cambodian social behavior is piap. Piap encompasses pride, honor, self-esteem, integrity, shame, disgrace and "losing face." It is often equated with one's soul, familial pride and integrity. It is an influential factor in controlling behavior. A Lao-Cambodian would try everything within his power to gain piap and to avoid losing piap. The loss of piap is a serious blow to one's well-being and that of his family in Lao-Cambodian society.

CHAPTER 2

The Refugee Experience in Cambodia and America

Refugee Experience in Cambodia and in the Refugee Camps
in Thailand and the Philippines

The U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, Cambodia closed on April 12, 1975. On that same day, "Operation Eagle Pull" evacuated the last Americans from the country who were considered "high risk." The local staff of the Embassy, who were of Cambodian nationality, were bused to Thailand to await further instructions from Washington. None of them knew that it was to be their last day in Cambodia. They were told to take a New Year's vacation in Thailand.¹ The evacuation plan was confused, badly coordinated and set up in hostility. A survey indicated that the majority of the refugees had no time to prepare.

Another component of the Cambodian refugees consisted mainly of Army officers and their families, particularly those in the Air Force and Navy who had the means to escape to Thailand when the government fell to the communists. It was not until April 25, 1975 that the U.S. Attorney General

1 Theresa Tayabas and Than Pok, "The Arrival of the Southeast Asian Refugees in America: An Overview," Bridging Cultures, ed. George M. Nishinaka (Los Angeles: Special Service for Groups, 1983), 6.

allowed Cambodians in other countries (e.g., Thailand and the Philippines) to enter the United States.²

As the political repression intensified in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos, a new wave of refugees attempted to escape through the sea or across the jungle. They were often unsure of their direction or final destination, facing hunger, starvation and even death. The lucky ones were able to reach the shores of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong, or the Philippines. The journey across the jungle was no less dramatic and tragic for the Cambodians, Hmong and Laotians than it was for their fellow Vietnamese. They had to cross mine fields, avoid ambushes, traverse jungles, avoid communist soldiers and tropical diseases. Death, hunger, starvation and exhaustion were common to all of them.

Life in refugee camps in Thailand and in the Philippines was hard to cope with. Even though some of the Lao-Cambodians speak Thai, they neither read nor write Thai. Those who were settled in the Philippines faced severe problems of adjusting to a new environment and language. However, the trauma of leaving their native land, being separated from their relatives, and being refugees in foreign countries had many manifestations which often led to -----

2 Tayabas and Pok, 7.

serious illness. The stress to which they have been subjected most acutely in the recent past has given rise to loss of sleep and appetite, depression and homesickness. Somatic complaints and alienation seem to be widespread. Some have lost their lives in the refugee camps.

The Refugee Experience in America

Since 1975, more than 1.5 million people have fled from their homes in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.³ War, revolution, invasion, internal political turmoil and famine precipitated this mass exodus. Migration occurred in two waves. The first wave covered the period from about April, 1975 to December, 1977. The refugees were from the national leadership class, such as government officials, military personnel and U.S. government related employees.

The second wave occurred from about January 1978 to December 1980. They were refugees largely from the farming class. Except for the few from the first wave, most had little linguistic facility in English. Because the Thai government intends to close out all of its refugee campus as soon as possible, the resettlement of the refugees to the third world countries has been continued until the present time.

3. "Indochinese Refugee Flows and Population as of May 31, 1983," Refugee Reports, Washington, D.C.: American Council for Nationalities Service, 1983, 8.

The Indochinese refugees and other previous refugee groups must be distinguished from voluntary immigrants. Mangalam and Scharzweller defined voluntary immigrants as

a relatively permanent moving away of a collectivity called migrants from one geographical location to another, preceded by decision-making on the part of the migrant on the basis of a hierarchically ordered set of values or value ends and resulting in changes in the interactional system of migrants.⁴

It is evident that, while the voluntary migrants moved from one place to another after the decision was made "on the basis of a hierarchically ordered set of values," the Indochinese refugees had no such choice. They were displaced from their countries by events outside of their control. It was no longer viable for the refugees to remain in their home countries, so they fled. Thus, entry into refugee status was involuntary and sudden. They were ill-prepared, practically and psychologically, for a sudden departure from their familiar social world.⁵

Demographic and Socio-Economic Factors

Although the reaction of the American public to the admittance of the Indochinese refugees was essentially negative, opinion was harsh and unfavorable. Still, the

4. J.J. Mangalam and H.K. Scharzweller, "Some Theological Guidelines Toward a Sociology of Migration," International Migration Review 4 (Spring 1970): 8.

5. Tayabas and Pok, 4-5.

has continued to increase at a rapid pace. It is estimated that 250,000 refugees now live in this country. The 1980 census indicated that a majority of refugees from Laos and Cambodia are residing in Long Beach. It is anticipated that many others who have been relocated elsewhere in the nation will move to the Long Beach area. This anticipation is supported by the following factors: (1) the climate of the area is similar to that of their places of origin, and (2) the pattern of resettlement by other refugee groups searching for a support community.

The 1980 U.S. census (Appendix C) is useful in locating exactly where Cambodians and Laotians are residing in the Long Beach area. The census gives no ethnic breakdown under Asian, in Tract Nos. 5763, 5764 and 5769. It shows that Asians are over 10 percent of the total population. In Long Beach, in general, the Asian population is 6 percent, but our experience is that mainly Cambodians are residing in the tracts mentioned above (see Appendix D). According to the Long Beach Health Department, the population's age distribution is as follows:

less than 25 years old:	25%
less than 30 years old:	75%
less than 40 years old:	83%

Financially these refugees depend on government subsidies. A 30 percent cut in domestic refugee funds,

requested by the Reagan administration, would result in a loss of \$155,053,000 in cash assistance and services for refugees (see Appendix A). Groups such as Cambodians and Laotians would suffer the most.

When all of these factors are combined, the trauma of acculturation (acculturation is defined as acquiring cultural skills to survive in a new society) will increase for Cambodians and Laotians. It is a well-known fact among social psychologists that cross-cultural adaptation is made more difficult by: (1) culture shock, (2) loss of social support deriving from and resulting in social isolation, (3) stress caused by the drastic change in status with little hope for improvement, and (4) cultural change resulting in cultural conflicts. Although Indochinese have been coping with these issues that are fundamental to human living with remarkable perseverance, the process of acculturation is lifelong and extremely painful. Some symptoms of psychological dysfunctions, such as reactive psychosis (paranoia, hysteria, depression, psychosomatic diseases), have begun to become visible among earlier refugees. The greatest difficulty is in the area of consciously adjusting to an entirely different (and often opposing) set of social norms. The conflicting norms between Western and Asian (especially for Laotians but also applicable to Cambodians)

Emergency Resettlement Service in Appendix B. They cover practically all the fundamental and usually subconscious aspects of the entire life of the individual and the group. It is for this reason that the refugee group (even more than other racial/ethnic groups) is in desperate need of its own support community with its own indigenous leadership and social mechanisms. It is only when the individuals begin to feel a part of a community that they can become acculturated. (In the reverse situation, Americans and Europeans go through the same process of acculturation in Asian or third world countries, creating their own churches, clubs and social organizations.)

In the past, all the Asian groups have shared one common denominator. While parent-generation immigrants have tended to adhere to their family religions (usually Buddhism), they have encouraged their children to become part of the dominant religion in this land. Buddhism is a social system rather than a religion in the Western sense. Those who become responsible for a household are obligated to continue with that system. But those parents tend to want their offspring to become "Americans," which to them means becoming Christians. For this reason, the parents often encourage their children and young men and women to go to church, while they themselves stay in their own religious

systems. We do not see anything different with Cambodians and Laotians in this regard. This means to us that at least a majority of the single refugees would rather seek a support community in a Christian church than in their Buddhist temples, especially now that such institutions are scarce.

Social Needs

Upon arrival in the United States, Indochinese refugees must modify their lifestyles in order to adapt to a new society. Most of them encounter many difficulties in seeking health and welfare services. A partial listing of services likely to be needed by the Indochinese refugee families includes:

- English language programs (formal or informal).

- Family and individual counseling.

- Vocational assistance -training, counseling, job finding.

- Housing

- Transportation.

- Support services with schools and training programs.

- Group development for parents, children and adolescents to deal with resettlement, adjustment and socialization issues.

- Community development and organization programs, group advocacy.

- Health services (programs related to health maintenance and disease, prevention and

treatment).

Dental care (prevention and treatment).

Mental Health services (prevention and treatment).

Advocacy and case-management to see that needed services are received.

Some aspects of these services are likely to be needed by most refugee families. It is important to emphasize that counseling related to extreme stress, delayed stress reactions, culture shock, and cultural adjustment is the primary mental service needed by refugee families, along with socialization and developmental services.

The first year of life in the new country is so taken up with survival and basic adjustment issues that many emotional reactions and family problems may not appear until the second or third year after resettlement. Developing supportive socialization and counseling services for families and children may well provide a positive readjustment experience. At least it may lower the risks of emotional damage and psychic trauma. Many refugees will suffer depression, because of their experiences of extreme loss. Yet it may be possible, through family-oriented self-help groups, to prevent major psychological breakdowns.⁶

6. Marie Weil, "Southeast Asian and Service Delivery -Issues in Service Provision and Institutional Racism," Bridging Cultures, ed. George M. Nishinaka (Los Angeles: Special Service for Groups, 1983), 156.

CHAPTER 3

The Role and Mission of the Christian Church in Working With Refugees

Theological Foundation for Ministry

We are told that theology is a discipline, a course of study, a career and teaching specialty, a necessity for ministry. It is churchly, christological, biblical, objectivist, personal, academic, concrete and practical. The problem is that many, if not most of these missiles have been launched at different targets. Some succeeded and some failed. The task of working out a theology of ministry properly begins with the task of identifying the nature and place of ministry itself.

All ministry is God's ministry. Jesus did not come to introduce His own ministry. His ministry was to do the will of the Father and to live by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. God's initial act, and every subsequent act of revelation, is a ministry of reconciliation. Out of this ministry emerges theological activity, exploring and expounding the nature and purpose of God in and for creation and human creatures. Theology thus serves as the handmaiden of ministry, proclaiming it as God's ministry and making known the eternal being of God. We cannot contemplate the

nature of God in His revelation without contemplating our own nature and purpose.¹

Ministry cannot be construed solely as the practical application (or technique) which makes theological knowledge relevant and effective. Theological activity must emerge out of ministry and for the sake of ministry if it is to be in accordance with the divine modality. The "practicality" of ministry suggests that ministry preceeds and determines the church. The on-going ministry of Jesus Christ gives both content and direction to the church in its ministry.²

The church does not have existence apart from being called into being through this ministry, and being equipped for it by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit calls people to faith, sanctifies them through many gifts, gives them strength to witness to the Gospel, and empowers them to serve in hope and love. The Spirit keeps the church in truth and guides it despite the frailty of its members.³

As Christ's own ministry is unfolded and proclaimed, the church discovers its own ministry, and its members their own particular ministry.

It accomplishes this by announcing the Gospel to the world and by its very existence as the body of Christ. In Jesus the Kingdom of God came among us. He offered salvation to sinners. He preached good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, liberation to the oppressed.

1 Ray S. Anderson, Theological Foundations for Ministry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 20.

2 Ray Anderson, 7-8.

3 World Council of Churches, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 20.

Christ established a new access to the Father. Living in this communion with God, all members of the church are called to confess their faith and to give account of their hope. They are to identify with joys and sufferings of all people as they seek to witness in caring love. The members of Christ's body are to struggle with the oppressed towards the freedom and dignity promised with the coming of the Kingdom.⁴

For God's ministry is at once revealing and reconciling with respect to the world.

Ministry is the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal church. Ministry or ministries can also denote the particular institutional forms which this service may take.

In Jesus' ministry, wholeness is equated with salvation. "Your faith has made you whole." The Greek word soma (in the New Testament translated into English as "body") really means whole person. When Paul refers to the body as the temple of God, he is referring to the whole person. When Jesus summarizes the commandments, he equates love for other with love of one's own person, of one's wholeness. For Bonhoeffer,

Christ was the "beyond" in the midst, and in his universal lordship, Lord even of those who have no religion. In his humanity Christ appears as the man without selfishness and without defenses, the man for others. In order to be credible witness to him,

4. World Council of Churches, Baptism, 20.

the church must adopt his style of life.⁵

"The goal of the ministry is the same as the goal of the church: increase among men the love of God and neighbor."⁶ Love is both a requirement and a gift given through Jesus Christ. The church is the community of love where people proclaim God's gift of growth, change and renewal. God is the process. As He said, "I will not forsake thee or leave thee." God is actively at work in the world, so that each one might know Jesus Christ and live a life of fellowship with other human beings and eternal fellowship with God.

Ministry of the Thai Church to
the Indochinese Refugees

Since the fall of the government of South Vietnam in 1975, the number of Indochinese refugees entering the neighboring country of Thailand has been very large. The Thai government has set up five refugee camps in order to provide some assistance to these refugees. Religious organizations such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) and its member churches have played a significant role in meeting the needs of the refugees. There has been a concern for relief, care and maintenance, integration and

5. Avery Dulles, Models of the Church (New York: Image, 1974), 101.

6. Richard Neibuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 31.

immigration. There has been a concern to awaken the churches at large to the causes and consequences of the various refugee situations, and to urge them to give humanitarian help as well as political action where possible. There has been a concern for cooperation and coordination of efforts at all levels.

The Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), which turned into the major country of asylum in Asia for refugees from Indochina, became an operational partner of the World Council of Churches Refugee Office in a large-scale program securing temporary care and maintenance, emigration and integration assistance for the refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In addition to the vast Indochinese program Church World Service (CWS), the churches in Europe and Australia have also played a vital role in promoting and providing resettlement opportunities for this category of refugee.

Since 1980 the Thai Community Church in Hollywood (PCUSA), like her mother church in Thailand, took on the task of helping Indochinese refugees who are residing in Southern California, particularly those Lao-Cambodian (Yaw) refugees in the Long Beach area. Due to the similarity in language, and having come from the same cultural background, the members of the Thai Community Church in Hollywood are

able to communicate and extend helping hands to the refugees. An outreach program from the Thai Community Church in Hollywood provides both physical and spiritual assistance.

Ministry of the Church

Ministry is a life of service in Christ, chosen and lived by the one who has answered the call to serve God and man.

The church carries out its ministry as it interprets and relates the Christian faith to the lives of individuals and groups, and to communities that encompass both. By assisting people in their role as worshippers to become more fully human, the church enables members of society to attain personal fulfillment and to respond to the real human needs of their communities.

In each generation and each place, the church seeks to redefine its reason for being, re-examine its fundamental task, understand the culture and concerns of its constituency, and work out methods for accomplishing its tasks. When it succeeds, people's lives and entire societies are enriched. When it fails, the church becomes weak and disintegrates, and society weakens with it.⁷

Some of the programs to be discussed have been operating in many churches in Southern California. Hopefully the suggestions from the writer would strengthen those existing programs.

Ministry to the refugees needs to be social as well as

⁷ James D. Anderson and Ezra E. Jones, The Management of Ministry (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 2,8.

spiritual and psychological.

Social Ministry

Teaching English as Second Language (ESL). The most common problem for Indochinese refugees is language deficiency. Although the Long Beach City school system has coordinated Indochinese refugee participation in ESL classes and related services, many churches offer ESL classes to help refugees individually or in groups. The goal of these programs is to help refugees speak, read and even write English in a short period of time. However, in most cases it takes longer, due to the educational background of these refugees, who are mainly farmers. It is important that the church have the right kind of materials and lesson plans to support such a language program. Most of the Unified School Districts are willing to cooperate with the church.

Employment. The major argument against accepting the refugees centered around the American's fear of job displacement. It was argued that resettlement en masse in certain areas such as New York, Southern California, or Texas would unduly strain the employment markets. This meant resettlement could prove to be an economic threat. In order to avoid this situation, the plan was to disperse the refugees throughout the country. However, most refugees encounter great difficulty in finding jobs anywhere they are

located, because of lack of knowledge and experience. Many churches take great pride in forming "job placement programs" by having their own members participate in finding jobs that fit the background of the refugees—janitorial work, gardening or landscaping, car-wash, etc. They also work closely with government agencies in training the refugees to improve their skills. These church programs have been of great help to the refugees, especially those who are no longer eligible for government subsidies.

Housing. The family is the strongest social unit for the Lao-Cambodian people. They maintain strong ties with their relatives and have an extensive kinship system. In most cases the unmarried children, and sometimes the married ones, stay with the parents. Therefore, an average Lao-Cambodian family usually exceeds six or seven persons. This creates problems because of rental policies. Families try to save rental fees by putting their extended family members in a one-bedroom apartment. Moreover, apartments are very scarce and expensive in Southern California. Some churches have purchased an apartment complex and allow refugees to occupy it with less or reasonable rental fees. Individual church members have helped in finding an apartment or house for refugees.

In working with these refugees, especially with Indochinese, the person in charge of "housing" teaches the

refugees about security in their apartments or homes. In Cambodia or in Asia, particularly in the countryside, homes are kept open during the working hours. You see and hear neighbors all day. There is shared life. The idea of securing property against intruders will be new to many Lao-Cambodian refugees.

Community Development. Indochinese communities in the U.S. are considered very small when compared with their homeland. Everyone seems to know one another, and newcomers integrate rapidly. If an individual has a problem, it will be really well-known in the rest of the community by the next day. Sometimes the information comes from the individual himself/herself or from that individual's family. The strength of the community lies in its ability to help to support one another in time of crisis. The spread of information is essential to this helping network. The social structures, norms and leadership roles transfer from the old country to the new communities here. There is an effort to maintain traditions and the society as it was in the past. To this effect the Indochinese refugees have but two choices: to adopt the American way of life or to maintain their own heritage. In future years their heritage will become adapted, acculturated and assimilated into this society, but the process is a long a complicated one. So as

the Indochinese move towards their own place in American society, there will be differences in the ways that their communities operate. In this case, confidentiality is not as Western thinkers perceive it. To function in a helping mode for the Indochinese communities, the church must understand this and work with it, not against it.

Interracial Relations. The United States has historically been a haven for immigrants seeking a brighter future and freedom from oppression. Because of their very different backgrounds, experiences, and value systems, developing a helping relationship between a Lao-Cambodian and an American is not easy. It may take persistent efforts to establish rapport, to structure the relationship, to gain understanding, to overcome communication barriers, and to eliminate possible interference from subconscious negative feelings. By far the most important ingredient in building relationship is rapport or mutual trust. When a Lao-Cambodian trusts someone, other barriers become less important. Thus far, the members of the church have created this kind of relationship with refugees and are encouraged to continue doing so.

Spiritual/Psychological Ministry

The Indochinese refugees survived years of war, displacement, relocation and the refugee camps to face culture shock and the monumental task of adaptation and

adjustment in America. Unlike other Asian/Pacific groups that preceded them, Indochinese refugees came here involuntarily, forced to leave their homelands and unprepared for what they would find here. Critical to their resettlement effort is appropriate and effective mental health treatment and service delivery. We need to review how Indochinese refugees view mental health, to learn what their treatment and service systems are like, and to apply these concepts to the American system.⁸

Further, it has been found that there is an initial resettlement period during which the refugee seeks to fulfill basic concrete needs such as employment and housing. After this initial period, emotional and psychological problems begin to appear, and the need for mental health counseling becomes apparent. Psycho-social needs become important for those refugees who have been in the U.S. for a couple of years. It is the task of the church to meet these needs and face head-on the many problems and issues confronting the community.

Counseling. Counseling programs are one of the great needs of Indochinese refugees. In almost every walk

8 Janlee Wong, "Appropriate Mental Health Treatment and Service Delivery System for Southeast Asians," Bridging Cultures, ed. George M. Nishinaka (Los Angeles: Special Service for Groups, 1983), 195.

of life they find difficulty and hardship. Counseling programs should include family counseling (such as marital counseling), educational counseling and mental health care.

A goal of counseling is to assist recipients in adjusting to, or otherwise negotiating, various environments. Counseling the culturally different is more complicated and needs special attention. Some churches have employed professional counselors in order to meet the needs of these refugees.

Derald W. Sue said that Asian immigrants who came to the United States carried with them many ancient traditions and customs that still are in evidence today. They clung tenaciously to their old ways and formed segregated communities that served as buffers for their survival.⁹

Since cultural values have such an impact on the behavior of Asian immigrants, it is necessary that we (as counselor or church worker) describe them in detail. In the traditional family, age, sex, and generational status are primary determinants of role behavior. Ancestors and leaders are viewed with great reverence and respect. The role of the female in the family is that of subservience to males and performance of domestic duties. Women are

⁹ Derald W. Sue, Counseling the Culturally Different: Theory and Practice (New York: Wiley, 1981), 120.

expected to marry, become obedient helpers of their mother-in-law, and bear children, especially male ones.

The dominant orientation of Asian families has always been conservative and resistant to change. Conflicts within the family are minimized, because the structure is so arranged that roles do not interfere with each other. Built into family relationships are strong values stressing the need to approach problems subtly and directly, rather than openly. Much effort is expended to avoid offending others.

The primary means used to keep family members in line and to suppress deviations from family norms are the inculcation of guilt and shame and appeals to obligation. Parents constantly emphasize their sons' and daughters' obligations to the family. If children attempt to act independently, contrary to the wishes of the parents, they are told that they are selfish and inconsiderate and not showing gratitude for all their parents have done for them.

Indochinese refugees have come from the same family orientation. Therefore, what the writer just described can be used as information when one counsels Asian or Indochinese refugees.

Culture. As pointed out by Marie Weil,¹⁰ developing a culturally appropriate service delivery system for

10 Weil, 157.

Indochinese refugees includes: (1) the need to develop appropriate micro level socialization, development and treatment services, (2) group programs, and (3) macro service needs for community development, group advocacy and community organization with an organizational network to support service coordination.

The church as the center of the community can develop supportive services for refugee families that build on strengths and emphasize a model of empowerment. Linkage with churches for children and adults is a major part of such a service design. Family-oriented counseling, where adjustment problems or stress are noted, will be an important aspect of a culturally appropriate service model.

In micro services, a variety of issues relating to racism, discrimination, prejudice, ignorance, and "cultural blindness" affect the environment of refugees in the mental health service system. Lack of cultural sensitivity with regard to treatment of clients of Asian background has been typical.

There is a need to provide group-based services for refugees with members of their own ethnic group and lifestyle. A period of identification with others felt to be like oneself may be very important in learning to take steps to adapt to Western customs and to develop a lifestyle which, maintaining one's own culture, can accommodate the

realities of American life. Groups for children, adolescents, and parents seem to be a natural and supportive means to aid in the adjustment process. They may help families learn to cope with role adjustments and the fears parents have of their children becoming "Americanized."

Critical concern facing refugees' families and service providers include: self-sufficiency, personal dignity, cultural adaptation to a very different industrial/technological culture, and an opportunity to develop family and community supports. Blum states,

Service to immigrants has broad implications for social welfare that directly relate to program emphasis. Aspects of the program that should be emphasized are those that encourage individual productivity, responsibility and a sense of self-worth...The design of the program will either aid or undermine the orientation toward achievement, will either build or tear down the sense of self-worth.¹¹

Even though many programs seem to support the idea of self-worth, the realities of program implementation frequently undermine the goals. Therefore, it is clear that there is a need for bilingual/bicultural workers and for a support system that recognizes welfare as a temporary support structure. This should be coupled with services and

11. M.D. Blum, Service to Immigrants in a Multicultural Society (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 216.

programs to help refugee families become self-sufficient.

Family Ministry. A church family group also plays an important role in the ministry of the church. There are two functions of a church family group. The first is the notion that such a group helps to shape our self-concept by serving as a standard of comparison for our judgment and evaluations of ourselves and our world. Second, membership in the group entails a set of social pressures that condition or shape individual behavior. It is the function of social pressure and its role as a standard of comparison that help to give the church family group what Dudley calls a culture-carrying capacity, for it is through processes such as these that an individual adapts the invisible, customary, and accepted beliefs and standards of a group.¹²

A church is made up of groups. The greater the range and number of those groups, the more the church will have to structure processes for keeping the individual groups tied into the congregation as a whole. There are about 50 families in the Lao-Cambodian fellowship. However, one household might have two or three family names. Some children and youth stay with their uncles and aunts or grandparents, due to the loss of their parents in the war.

¹² Carl S. Dudley, Unique Dynamics of the Small Church (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1976), 6.

If the church pays more attention to the family outreach, membership will increase. Family ministries should include family counseling, such as educational counseling, pre-marital counseling; family health care; transportation (to the church, hospital and health department); prayer meeting once a week or once every two weeks. Family visitation would bring a good relationship between the pastor and church members. Lao-Cambodians feel very honored if the pastor visits them.

A major test of the structure of any church is the degree to which individuals are enabled to freely join and participate in an association of other Christians. What happens to the new member who has not yet joined or who has not yet found a family home in the congregation is a crucial test of church structure. The extent to which a member can be placed in a church family group and the extent to which all the groups coexist in some harmony is an indication of the extent to which fellowship is present in the congregation.

CHAPTER 4

The Mission, Ministry and Management of the Lao-Cambodian
Presbyterian Church of Long BeachBrief History

In 1980 the Thai Community Church in Hollywood (PCUSA) decided to reach out and bring the Gospel to the Lao-Cambodians (Yaw) in the Long Beach area. At that time there were about 80 children and youth gathered at the Emmanuel Presbyterian Church in Long Beach. The joint project was established by the two churches in order to meet the needs of this group of people. The highlight of the project occurred in June 1981 when 39 youth accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Due to funding and demographic problems, in 1982 some 40 of the young people moved toward downtown Long Beach, which is closer to their homes. They used Lime Baptist Church for their place of worship. They met regularly on Sunday morning from 9:00 a.m. to noon. The Thai Community Church in Hollywood provided them with leadership and finances. The number had grown to almost 60 members. In February of 1985 this group was adopted by the Los Ranchos Presbytery as its project. The writer of this project was

called to be its organizing pastor on a part-time basis. The group had moved to a new home with the First United Presbyterian Church, 600 East Fifth Street, Long Beach.

Since then membership has increased, with an average attendance of 75 adults and 20 children for Sunday worship. Approximately two-thirds of the members are young people. Financially, it is supported by the Los Ranchos Presbytery, the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii, General Assembly and the fellowship itself. It is the goal of this project to be organized as a non-profit organization by 1988 and to be able to support itself by 1992.

The Proposal Mission, Ministry and Management of the
Lao-Cambodian Presbyterian Church of Long Beach

The church is one critical component of ministry. Ministry takes place within the church as people's needs are correlated with God's answers, and as people who have been with God in the church are able to incorporate the divine revelation in the totality of their lives at home, work and play. Ministry refers to relationships: people to God, people to people, and people to community.

"Ministry of the church always includes four components--community, reason for being, organization, and leadership."¹ For ministry to function at an optimal level, all four components must be correlated. The process of

1 Anderson and Jones, 18.

ministry breaks down when any of these four components of ministry is overlooked or subordinated to the others. The ministry also breaks down when forms and processes intended for relating people to God through the church are severed or become dysfunctional for any reason.

In short, the ministry of the church is the process of interrelating the four components as mentioned. The ministry of the church, therefore, has two focuses: first, those who participate in it as members of the congregation; and second, the people, processes, and the structures of society that are touched by the member of the congregation in the community.

Concern for the structures of the church, and particularly for the need of changing them is therefore not to be understood only as social adjustment to changing conditions but also as an expression of obedience to God's mission."²

One must keep in mind that there are no simple models for structure of the church. Church historian Robert Paul has pointed out that our Christian ancestors had conviction that there is a functional relationship between the form the church takes and the Gospel it intends to proclaim. It is an ancient Christian tradition to assert

2. World Council of Churches, The Church for Others and the Church for the World: A Quest for Structures for Missionary Congregations (Geneva: WCC, 1967), 70.

the authority of the church's structure as a mediation of the authority of Jesus Christ. This does not mean we must believe that there is present in the New Testament and in the church tradition a form of church structure for all time. The restoration of church structure to its New Testament purity is an empty literalism. However, the point of view of organizational life is to take with the utmost seriousness the power of social structure to shape our destiny as human beings.³

The most important factor shaping congregational structure should be appropriateness to the nature of the surrounding community. The Presbyterian study highlights again and again the fact that the community in which a congregation is located usually makes a significant difference as to the potential for growth or decline. No matter how hard a congregation works, its environment may determine its fate. Donald McGavran, who has investigated the causes of church growth in different cultures and in different historical periods, found that growth continually reflects the reality of a good fit between community and

3. Robert Paul, The Church in Search of Itself (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 44.

structure.⁴ A mission will not grow if it is alien or foreign to the culture in which it finds itself. A truly missionary model of the congregation would focus on the degree to which the parish is alien to, or indigenous to, the culture and community in which it finds itself.

The Christian church has at least five primary, essential tasks: worship, education, nurture (care for one another), mission and organizational maintenance. The writer would like to discuss each of these tasks in detail, and explain why they are so essential in relation to the management structure of the Lao-Cambodian ministries.

Worship

As was discussed in the previous chapter, Lao-Cambodian society has strong family relationships. Everyone is phinong or relatives to each other. Creating a worshipping community for these people is to make worship a family gathering where everyone is welcome. The Lao-Cambodian community of Long Beach is a mixed group of religious believers. Some are Christians, some Muslims, and a majority of them are Buddhists. An atmosphere of "family gathering" would allow both Christians and non-Christians to get involved in the worship. Because of the unique background of the Lao-Cambodian community, the place and -----

4. Donald McGavran, Understanding Church Growth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 153.

practice of worship needs to be carefully planned. The writer proposes that:

1. Worship should be held on Sunday morning.

Times and activities for Sunday include:

9:30-10:00 a.m. -Singing--learning new hymns.

10:00-10:45 a.m. -Church School (Bible classes)

10:45-11:00 a.m. -Break

11:00-12:00 p.m. -Worship service in the sanctuary.

2. Order of worship should be printed in Thai and English. Hymnals also should be printed in both languages.
3. A sermon should be summarized in Thai or English. It depends on the language used by the preacher.
4. Order of worship should include member participation, such as community prayer, testimony, choir, passing offering bags, and others.
5. Allow our youth or adults to lead the order of worship. These participants need to be trained by the pastor.
6. Use the sanctuary as the place of worship as much as possible. This is due to their

Buddhist background. The Lao-Cambodian believed that a true worship is at the church, as they once worshipped in the Buddhist temple.

7. The order of worship includes oral announcement of upcoming church events and community concerns. Printing news and announcements in the Sunday bulletin is not effective because of language deficiency. The majority of senior and adult members are illiterate.
8. The sermon, for the time being, should be easy to understand and concern their daily living.
9. Once or twice a year, the Lao-Cambodian fellowship should have a joint worship with the host church, such as the Worldwide Communion Sunday. This worship would benefit both congregations.
10. Outdoor worship is recommended once or twice a year in members' homes, in the park or by the sea.

In conclusion, it is the pastor's role to educate his/her members to understand the true meaning of Christian worship. They also need to understand why they have to

attend the church and register as a member of the church. A Buddhist temple does not have a "membership roll" like a Christian church. This means that each Buddhist is not a member of any certain temple (usually there are two or three temples in the village). He/she has choices: to attend the temple or not attend. There is no obligation involved. They need to be taught that worship is very important to Christian life and the life of their church. They are registered as a member of that church. They are expected to attend worship service regularly and participate in the church activities.

Education

Christian education is a basic tasks of the Christian church. The church must give careful attention to Jesus' commission to make disciples, baptize them, and help them learn all the teachings and commandments of our religious tradition. Christian education occurs in both formal and informal settings. Formal settings are intentional, specific situations and programs such as Sunday School, confirmation and membership classes, study groups, camps, conferences, retreats, youth groups and so on. Education is happening all the time.

To make a Christian education program meet the spiritual needs of the church members it must:

1. Be wholistic. The Christian educators should

and can seize every opportunity to connect the educational endeavor with everything else that is happening.

2. Be individualized. It must identify and respond to the gifts and needs of each person.
3. Be familial. The church school in its teaching can stress relationships and Christian community.
4. Be ecological. Christian education should help people learn and act on their interdependence with the rest of the world-the world outside the church.
5. Affirm the tradition. Christian education programs must develop and communicate a continuous sense of the Christian tradition, beginning with Abraham and begetting down through the ages to the saints, pillars, and characters here in our own churches, so that each person can be grafted on to the tradition.
6. Be Christian. Christian education is teaching everything that Christ commanded, and it is helping people to be Christ for others.
7. Demonstrate to our learners that faith should

be connected to action.

Following these guidelines, the writer proposes a Christian education program for the Lao-Cambodian Presbyterian Church members:

1. Divide members into three Bible classes:

Adult Group -for members that read and write Thai

Youth Group -for members that read and write English

Children's Group -English speaking only.

There are more than 30 children in the church. This group should be divided into smaller groups:

-Nursery....infant up to 3 years old

-Kindergarten....4-5 years old

-Elementary.....6-9 years old
Group I

10-13 years old
Group II

2. The church shall provide adequate Sunday School material and lessons planned for each group. Bible should be in English and/or bilingual, Thai-English.

3. The church will provide special training for members/teachers who are interested in teaching these classes. This can be done at

the church in conjunction with the Presbytery Resource Center. Volunteers from the host church or neighboring churches are encouraged to participate in teaching. This is due to our limited personnel.

4. Recruit and encourage those who have the ability to teach to get involved in a teacher-training program.
5. Encourage members of each class, especially adults and youth, to attend camps such as youth camps, adult seminars, Junior High Camps, High School Camps. These camps are under the supervision of the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii.

A Christian education program can be established easily in the Lao-Cambodian Church. This is due to their willingness to learn more about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mission

Mission is the mark of the church. This means that mission is definitive and obligatory in the life of the church and its local congregations. All Christians agree that the church is sent. It started with God Himself. He sent His prophets, His Son, and His Spirit. Of these missions, the mission of the Son is central, for it was the culmination of the ministry of the prophets, and it embraced

within itself, as its climax, the sending of the Spirit. During His public ministry, Jesus first sent out the Apostles, and then after His death and resurrection He widened the scope of the mission to include the whole world. Jesus said:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matt. 28:18-20 (NIV)

The Lao-Cambodian Presbyterian Church of Long Beach intends to be structured as a "mission church" for its community, especially to the Indochinese refugees. It needs to emphasize mission, evangelism, and social concern.

Evangelism. Christians have always believed that the central mission of the church is evangelism. Elton Trueblood in his book, Incendiary Fellowship, compared evangelism to a fire. He writes,

Evangelism occurs when people are so enkindled by contact with the central fire of Christ that they, in turn, set others on fire. We know that something is on fire by a programatic test. Other fires are started by it. A fire that does not spread much will eventually go out. 'Christian' without a mission, like that fire does not burn; it is a

contradiction in terms."⁵

The program of the church is to witness unto Jesus. Every activity and program of the church must point people to Jesus. Careful plans for evangelization need to be set up. These are some procedures to be taken by the Lao-Cambodian Presbyterian Church of Long Beach:

1. Define the geographic area for which it will accept primary responsibility in beginning its penetration.
2. Presentations of the Gospel in the Yaw/Thai language. These presentations are needed in various forms: pamphlets, cassettes, books, cartoons, hymn books, music and church school curriculum materials for all ages.
3. Guidelines and materials for services that provide opportunities for Christian witness:
 - ESL classes
 - Daycare center for children of working parents
 - Radio programs
 - Social services programs
 - Recreational programs
 - Bible study programs

⁵ Elton Trueblood, Incendiary Fellowship (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 111.

4. Make a periodic contact with every resident.
At least once every six months every resident should have a personal visit, receive a gospel tract and information about the church, or receive a telephone call.
5. Conduct evangelistic events periodically that will draw out "seekers" from the community. Utilize evangelistic crusades, special music programs, one-night evangelistic services, special speakers, evangelistic banquets and dinners, and testimonies.

The members of the Lao-Cambodian Church must have a full understanding and know the procedures of evangelism. Since the great majority of the Lao-Cambodian population of Long Beach is in the age group under 40 and most are under 30 (70%), the major emphasis, at least in the initial stage, will need to be on reaching out to young adults and youth. With a full-scale outreach program of comprehensive nature described, it can be anticipated that the group thus gathered, in addition to some 30 young adults already baptized as Presbyterian in 1981, will be able to become a self-supporting congregation in the next six to eight years, when many of them will reach maturity. However, evangelism to the elderly, especially to women (who usually stay at

home), should not be ignored. Lao-Cambodian women can play a significant role in the church.

Social Concern. The concern to apply the Gospel to man's need today has led many evangelistic Christians to ask about the relation between evangelism and social responsibility. The Christian lives in the world as well as in the church, and has responsibilities to the world as well as the church. Expressing God's love through meeting human need is a legitimate opportunity for sharing the Gospel. It is not inherently exploitative. Care needs to be exercised, however, to create and affirm the freedom of each person to decide his/her religious preference.

Nurture

The primary purpose of the disciplines, structure of accountability, and mission of the church is to build life, together: to create liberating communities of caring. To each of us is given a gift for the building of a community in which we can learn to embrace our pain, and to overcome all these oppressive inner structures that would keep us in bondage and make us protective and anxious for our future.

The church is a community of caring people.

Because the community cares for persons as persons and for families as families, there is no type of need to which it should not respond. Physical needs, economic needs, recreational needs, emotional needs, social needs, and educational needs all are important, and ideally the church is sensitive to all of them.... Given the limits of its resources, the church must give special attention to the needs

to which other institutions expect the church to offer the primary ministry: the need to worship, to meditate, and to pray; the need for meaning in life's major transitions and crises; and need for guidance in determining convictions, commitments, and vision.⁶

We have learned from the previous chapter about the background of the Lao-Cambodian refugees in this country. We realize the pressure they have been through. While the resettlement, adjustment and self-development phase is taking place, the people need an extraordinary amount of human care in almost every detail of life, such as:

- knowing details of life in the U.S.--survival skills.
- health care.
- housing.
- legal assistance--referrals and processing.
- translation.
- job skill development and placement.
- indigenous help in psychological dysfunctions and in giving overall purpose in life.
- assistance in developing a new lifestyle/identity for young adults and youth
- language skill development

This list may be easily multiplied. The Lao-Cambodian ministry will need to assist in locating available services

6. Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and John B. Cobb, Christian Identity and Theological Education (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 52-53.

and transporting the people for many of these needs.

For a church to be faithful and effective in feeding, clothing, visiting, healing, welcoming, or in bringing good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and the proclamation of God's redeeming love, it must be visionary and discriminating, as well as loving. A mission church must be able both to see what is and to envision what might be. It must also be able to decipher out of the world's clamoring what needs and opportunities are most important and most appropriate for its available personnel and resources. And it must then give itself in love. The Gospel demands not piety, but love.

Maintenance

Maintenance is everything else a church does, so that it can ably worship, learn, care, and serve. Church maintenance areas are: leadership, facilities, organization, finances, communication, growth, morale and conflict, planning, and outside relationships (community, denominational, ecumenical).

In this section the writer will explain how these maintenance areas can be used effectively in the Lao-Cambodian Church situation.

Leadership. The church could not operate without leadership. The pastor always takes the important role of

leadership in the church. He/she was called to be a shepherd of God's flock. The pastor also has the task of developing leadership in the church through its members. The well-trained laity could be of great help to the church in working with the pastor.

It is the writer's desire, and the desire of this fellowship, that the future leader of this congregation should be a Lao-Cambodian. However, having gone through the humiliating defeat in Southeast Asia, former leaders of the groups have lost leadership and/or would not volunteer to be leaders of the new group. Because of cultural and racial pressures from society here, many have resorted to mere survival tactics such as withdrawal into autistic pursuits. Developing leaders from within the new community will become the key to the success of the project and the well-being of the new group. Lao-Cambodians are an honest warm and community-centered people. If the right kind of leadership is developed, the community will grow in quality and quantity.

In developing leadership for ministry among the Indochinese people we should start from these resources:

1. At the local level: Identify natural Indochinese leaders, equip and empower them to lead. Entrust them with significant tasks in

mission.

2. At the presbytery and synod level: Identify and equip persons for leadership (both ministry and structural roles), including new immigrants and others.
3. The importance for the denomination to have some non-Indochinese people who learn one or more of the languages, and build deeper levels of communication.
4. Collection of names and addresses of currently available leaders can be used as resource persons for developing or existing projects.

Facilities. Facilities are very important tools for the ministry of the church. Many ethnic churches are facing this problem. At the present time the high cost of building a new facility makes it hard for ethnic churches to have a building of their own. Therefore, most of the ethnic congregations are "nesting" with the bigger churches of their related denominations. The Lao-Cambodian Presbyterian Church is nesting with the First United Presbyterian Church of Long Beach. This church has become the spiritual home to them.

A few problems have occurred with those churches which share a facility with another congregation, including:

maintenance and upkeep of the place and

surrounding area.

rental/leasing agreements to use the facilities
put too much pressure on the leasee.

racial discrimination (usually from the host
church members).

parking area is inadequate.

no sense of belonging for the members of the
ethnic church (familiar term used such as
"Yours" or "Mine" instead of "Ours").

It is important for both congregations to overcome
these problems, so that "peace" will come to their members.

Organization. There are two keys to church growth
under the headship and lordship of Jesus. First is spirit,
and second is organization.⁷ A healthy organization accepts
and allows for three components in its life: myth, belief
and norm. It moves from a feeling about who it is (myth),
to an articulation of those feelings into statements of what
it is for (belief), to actions and behaviors which express
its identity and purpose (norms).⁸

Organization is not primary, but it is necessary.
Organization for organization's sake is wrong and defeating.
It should grow out of need. The Lao-Cambodian Presbyterian
Church was organized to meet the needs of the Indochinese

7. Darell W. Robinson, Total Church Life (Nashville:
Broadman, 1985), 68.

8. David R. Ray, Small Churches Are the Right Size
(New York: Pilgrim, 1982), 159.

refugees. To be able to meet the goals stated previously, the organizational structure needs to be carefully planned. Here are some proposals:

A. Governing Board

The Governing Board will be composed of representatives from two Presbytery committees--the Presbytery and Congregational Development Committee and the Committee on Representation and Ethnic Ministries. Other members will be drawn from Presbytery area Ministry (PAM) -Long Beach, a Presbytery cluster committee. Included as ex-officio members are the Congregational Development Consultant, Presbytery of Los Ranchos and Associate Executive for Asian-American Ministries, Synod of Southern California and Hawaii. An important part of the Governing Board will be the participation of members of the developing Laotians/Cambodians fellowship.

B. Project Community Representation

As leadership develops in the target community, representation on the governing board will grow so that there will be active participation in the decision-making process by those involved in the New Church

Development (NCD).

C. Accountability

The Governing Board will be accountable to the Presbytery of Los Ranchos through the designated staff resource person and the Presbytery Committees assigned the responsibility for this project.

D. Job Description

Director/Organizing Pastor

i. Responsibilities:

- a. to conduct worship services on Sunday mornings.
- b. to initiate, administer, and if necessary, teach church school, Bible study to young adult/youth groups.
- c. to enlist, train and develop leaders and teachers for church school, Bible study and young adult/youth groups.
- d. to deliver direct/referral services in human care.
- e. to organize and administer transportation services as necessary.
- f. to develop, and, if necessary, to conduct acculturation courses for the

new refugees, if not available in the accessible locations.

- g. to develop the Project from Specialized Ministry to New Church Development by 1988, and possibly to be a self-supporting congregation by 1990 or 1992 at the latest.
 - h. to develop indigenous personnel resources for the Project -such as youth workers, administerial candidates and future lay leaders.
 - i. to participate on the governing board and also to facilitate participation of the people of the Project on the Governing Board.
- ii. Qualifications:
- a. to be proficient in Yaw, Cambodian and/or northern Thai, and English.
 - b. to be able to conduct worship services every Sunday in a setting indigenous to the target population while within the context of the Reformed Tradition.
 - c. to have an in-depth understanding of, and identify with, the Khmer culture in general and to act/behave

accordingly.

- d. to have some experience in counseling and/or psychotherapy with Southeast Asians.
- e. to be ordained in the Reformed Tradition (preferred).
- f. to have experience in developing a new congregation (an NCD) in the U.S. as an organizer.

Communication. Communication is very important in the church. It is important because everyone expects to know about everything that is going on in their church or community. The church finds ways to communicate or relate to its members through:

- weekly newsletter
- announcements in Sunday church bulletin
- local newspaper (in Thai or Lao)
- posters and pamphlets
- radio programs

These kinds of communications are very helpful to members of the church and also to newcomers.

Growth. In this country, there are many people in need of the Good News. Therefore, church growth has been a goal for some churches. C. Peter Wagner, in his book, Your

Church Can Grow, said that "many churches did not grow because they do not want to grow."⁹ Then he pointed out five qualities of church growth that leaders should have. They are:

- a. Single-minded obedience.
- b. Clearly defined objectives.
- c. Reliance on discerning research.
- d. Ruthlessness in evaluation of results.
- e. An attitude of optimism and faith.

The writer would like to suggest, in the Lao-Cambodian situation, that church growth will be a success if: The church will try to reach where they are. Lao-Cambodian people will not attend church unless we invite them first. Pastor and church leaders cannot do this alone. The church must marshall its great army of lay people for this task. The church will build up strength among her lay persons. Four steps are necessary in doing so:

1. Enlighten the laity. The church must preach, teach, and instruct the laity in truth about the role of the lay person in the life of the church.
2. Enlist the laity. Lay people are at different levels of spiritual maturity. They need to be

⁹ C. Peter Wagner, Your Church Can Grow (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1981), 30-31.

involved at some level of outreach. Every lay person can be involved in some way.

3. Equip the laity. Many lay persons have a deep sense of witnessing, but they do not know how. The church needs to equip them. It is the pastor's responsibility to equip his lay people.

4. Engage the laity. Every church has a corporate witness within the community. The life of the body influences the spiritual, moral, social, and economic life in the community. A church must keep its witness as strong and pure as the body. This gives strength to the personal witness of the believer.

Morale and Conflict. Morale is critical to the quality of the church's life. High morale must be nourished. Low morale can be turned around.

Conflict is present in all churches, especially in small churches. When there is a conflict between people or over an issue, it cannot be ignored, even if everyone is not involved or even if it is not a church issue.

There are several possible ways for the pastor and/or church to minister to conflicting persons or in conflict

situations. Be an enabler of communication. Be a forum where issues and feelings can be aired, considered, and resolved or understood. Be a leader in the search for alternatives, so that all parties can win all or part of what they want, rather than having just winners and losers. Be a channel of God's grace through whom the spirit of God can work reconciliation.

Carl Dudley said about the conflict in churches, especially in small churches, that:

they can afford to fight, because they are not held together by rational commitments, nor the outcome of any particular decision. The ties that hold small churches are in the past: family and people, space and territory, history and tradition, culture carrying in the Christian faith. These are commitments of the heart. The pastor (or church members) who shares an appreciation of these elements can heal the most divided church and mobilize the most withdrawn congregation.¹⁰

If conflict occurs in the Lao-Cambodian community, it needs to be taken seriously because a Lao-Cambodian will try everything within his/her power to gain piap and to avoid losing piap or losing face. "Loser" means "losing face." Therefore, no one wants to be a loser. Conflict in Asian churches could bring destruction to the church. Therefore, conflict needs to be "handled with care" in the Asian culture.

Planning. Planning is important for the church.

10 Dudley, 20.

However, planning could turn a few people on, and turn many off. We realize that many churches do not have articulated goals. Goals are important when a church is in transition such as having a new minister, changing membership, or changing community, when there is a crisis, when there is a unique opportunity, or when there are new people to be included in the life of the church. Lyle Schaller in his book, Survival Tactics in Parish, suggested that goals should be met by three criteria:¹¹

A goal should be specific.

A goal should be attainable.

A goal should be measurable.

Kenneth L. Callahan said that for the church to be effective and successful it must have effective, long-range planning.¹² He submits that:

1. Effective long-range planning is diagnostic in its focus.
 2. Effective long-range planning is strategic in its decisions. Discussion and study are the modest prelude to major decisions.
 3. Effective long-range planning is hopeful -- responsibly and courageously.
-

11. Lyle E. Schaller, Survival Tactics in the Parish (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), 157.

12. Kenneth L. Callahan, Twelve Keys to an Effective Church (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 11.

3. Effective long-range planning is hopeful -- responsibly and courageously.

There are twelve relational characteristics that a diagnostic approach can have:

1. Specific concrete mission objectives.
2. Pastoral and lay visitation.
3. Concrete, dynamic worship.
4. Significant relational groups.
5. Strong leadership resources.
6. Streamlined structures and solid participatory decision-making.
7. Several competent programs and activities.
8. Open accessibility.
9. High visibility.
10. Adequate parking, land and landscaping.
11. Adequate space and facilities.
12. Solid financial resources.¹³

In some sense, Lao-Cambodian ministry could be characterized as a missional church, due to its existence and environment. What we have discussed so far should be helpful in the planning of its ministry.

Finance. Money is frequently perceived as a life-and-death matter in small churches. However, almost all small churches have or want a church building and substantial

13. Callahan, 12-14.

clergy leadership, and this does cost money. In the Lao-Cambodian ministry, at the present time, money is not the main problem because of the subsidy from general Assembly, Synod of Southern California and Hawaii, and Presbytery of Los Ranchos. However, by the year 1990 or 1992 this ministry hopes to be a self-supporting congregation. Therefore, it must begin its financial planning. Stewardship needs to be taught now, in order for the members to understand their responsibility as God's people, even though their Buddhist background and financial status might slow down the goal. Fund-raising activities such as rummage and food sales, auctions and fairs should be encouraged. Fund-raisers are a terrific way of involving people on the fringes of the church.

Outside Relationships. A church is part of its surrounding community. Most are in some kind of relationship with neighboring or nearby churches. It has been the pattern of church life to encourage and foster a real Christian penetration in all the places of human life. "Place" should be understood not just in terms of the complex of communities that make up an Asian community in the United States today.

Churches in the same community need to develop creative and cooperative relationships with one another, so that they can carry out their mission hand-in-hand with each

other. For churches, being "one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28) might better mean being brothers and sisters in the family of churches, rather than being clones or composites.

Denominational relationship is also important for newly organizing churches. Most denominations have responded to small churches with studies, resources, and concern. However, some of these efforts have been patronizing, ill-informed, and misdirected; others have been on target and helpful. Denominational responses to their churches, which are generally the majority of their churches, have tended to be cosmetic and symptomatic rather than substantive. And sometimes they have been too little too late. Ethnic churches usually affiliate with the main denominations according to their background. Sometimes we ethnic churches need to speak up and speak out to our denominations, in order to let them know our needs and hurts. Denominations and denominational officials need to listen, adapt, and advocate for their ethnic churches and most of all "don't patronize" us. This kind of relationship would bring a better understanding of each other.

The Lao-Cambodian ministry should keep a close relationship with the Asian Presbyterian Council (APC) under the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii, and also be a member of the National Asian Presbyterian Council (NAPC)

under the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America. In doing so, it could learn and work with other ethnic churches under the same denomination. Neighboring churches in Long Beach should not be ignored.

CONCLUSION

Organizing a new congregation and managing it is a hard task for those who are involved. However, each new congregation is an opportunity for Christians to recall their own religious traditions which may be practiced and shared. The creation of a new religious institution is an occasion to reflect, experiment, to innovate, and to participate in the establishment of a religious fellowship that can respond to the distinctive needs of the people who choose to worship and serve in it. It is an opportunity for the members to symbolize and hold before the total community the participation of God in the lives of people and the fundamental need of people to share their lives and faith with one another.

Developing a congregation is a long, arduous, and complex process. It requires skills and commitment, patience and hard work. Each community is unique, and offers distinctive challenges. Each new church must be tailored for its environment, and include the participation of a large number of people.

Each step in the new church development process reflects, and is affected by, the other steps. The failure of the judicatory or new congregation at any point may negate or seriously impair the total effort. The judicatory has the responsibility of doing a general survey and developing a denominational strategy for it. It selects and purchases rights, conducts feasibility studies in specific communities thought ready for new churches, prepares a preliminary mission design for each new church on the basis of its study and the distinctive characteristics of the community to be served, secures adequate financial support for the congregation, and selects a pastor who has the qualifications and commitment to lead it. The pastor is charged with the responsibility of gathering the congregation and organizing it effectively. The young congregation, together with the pastor, continues the church's outreach, evaluates and rethinks the mission design, and provides permanent headquarters for its ministry.

The attempt has been made in this thesis to provide an adequate management of structuring the Lao-Cambodian ministry in Long Beach. Simply stated we have based our discussion on the following principles:

1. The church is the body of Christ and a

community of God's chosen people. She proclaims the good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, liberation to the oppressed.

2. In order to fulfill her mission in the world, the church trains those who receive a special call to be ordained ministers, elders, and deacons. The church also trains lay people to be involved in her ministry.

3. The management structures of the church should be based on:

- the understanding of the ministry of the church,
- the process of ministry,
- the structure of the church itself, and
- the leadership in the church.

4. In building a new congregation for a Lao-Cambodian community, the church must base its structures on the needs and the differences of this particular group of people such as:

- a. Their culture, family structure and social-life background.
- b. The demographics of their community in the U.S.
- c. The needs they encounter in a foreign

land.

5. This new congregation will educate and train members to understand the true meaning of Christian life by participating in the following activities:

Worshipping

Christian education

Mission of the church

Caring for one another

Organizational maintenance

If the church is able to do these proposed activities with the participation of the Lao-Cambodian people, the church will definitely succeed in its goals and become a strong and healthy church.

Appendices

- A. Summary of Proposed Federal Refugee and Entrant Assistance for FY 1985
- B. Definitions of the World and Social Relations According to Laotian Culture
- C. Census Data of City of Long Beach
- D. Demographic of the Lao-Cambodian Population in Long Beach

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED FEDERAL REFUGEE AND ENTRANT ASSISTANCE
FOR FY 85

	<u>FY 84</u> <u>Estimate</u>	<u>FY85</u> <u>Estimate</u>	<u>Increases/</u> <u>Decreases</u>
State Administered Programs:			
Cash Assistance	\$200,128,000	\$147,645,000	\$-52,483,000
Medical Assistance	110,437,000	79,865,000	-30,572,000
State Administration	46,585,000	33,900,000	-12,685,000
Subtotal	357,150,000	261,410,000	-95,740,000
Social Services	44,400,000	46,200,000	+ 1,800,000
TOTAL, State Adm. Programs	\$401,550,000	\$307,610,000	\$-93,940,000
Targeted Assistance	\$ 85,500,000	\$ 19,390,000	\$-62,110,000
Educational Assistance for Children	16,600,000	12,976,000	- 3,624,000
Preventive Health	4,400,000	8,891,000	+ 4,491,000
Voluntary Agency Programs	4,000,000	4,000,000	-----
Federal Administration	6,515,000	6,645,000	+ 130,000
TOTAL, Refugee and Entrant Assistance budget authority	\$514,565,000	\$359,512,000	\$-155,053,000

S O U R C E: Department of Health and Human Services

Appendix B

DEFINITIONS OF THE WORLD AND SOCIAL
RELATIONS ACCORDING TO LAOTIAN CULTURE

LOAS

The differences below have been pointed out with full knowledge that this is dangerous stereotyping. You may know Laotians who in no way fit the pattern described or you may know many Americans who do not fit in with this pattern. But, if some of the Laotians begin to show some signs of culture shock, the root causes may lie in some of the value differences that have been pointed out.

One should note that group identity whether it be family (the most important), organizations, church or others, precedes self identity. Individual achievement is not important unless it is done for the group's advancement. Lao people believe that "If you fly with crows, you are a crow and if you strut with peacocks, you are a peacock.

THE WORLD

"Western"

"Asian"

A. What is the nature of truth?

Absolute

Relative to
circumstances
Inclusive

Exclusive

B. What is the world like?

Physical

Spiritual

Mechanical

Organic

Scientific

Mystical

C. What is the nature of man?

Evil

Good (but veiled in
profound ignorance)

D. What is the nature of property?

Privacy is important

Utility is important

An extension of self

Part of natural order

E. How is time defined?

Precise units
Limited resources

Relative to events
Unlimited

SOCIAL RELATIONS

A. Status

Stress equality
Informal

Spontaneous

Stress rank
Formal manners and
rituals
Predictable

B. Groups

Join for self purposes

Members influential

Expectations of
group paramount
Leaders control

C. Judgment of others

Specific ability
Task centered

General character
Person centered

D. Communications

Direct
Open

Indirect
Cautious to save face

E. Basis of social control

Guilt

Shame

F. Activity

Concern with doing
Work is the end itself

Aggressive and compulsive

Concern with becoming
Work is a means to
the other ends
Graceful and artistic

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